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PVC-El Coyote-Op 37Eexcavation Report

Edward Mark Schortman
schortma@kenyon.edu

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Operation 37

Operation 37 was extensively investigated during the 2002 field under the direction of W. McFarlane. The results of this research are reported in detail in his dissertation (McFarlane 2005). The excavations of Strs. 204 and 247 that are summarized here were conducted from March 25- April 28, 2004 under the direction of A. Matlack and P. Urban. Structures 204 and 247 are located within 1m of each other, the latter lying southeast and downslope from the former. Structure 220, the large focal building around with the Northeast Group of El Coyote pivots, is 11m to the north. A total of 206m² was cleared within Subop. 37B, C, and E (Str. 204) and 37D, F-Y, AA, AB (Str. 247).

Structure 204

Structure 204 occupies the southern crest of the upper river terrace that supports the Northeast Group within El Coyote. Structure 247 is 1m to the southeast while Str. 220 is 11m to the north. The terrain surrounding Str. 204 is relatively flat, though it begins to drop off towards the Rio Cacaupala immediately to the southeast. Digging here exposed roughly 28m², excavations being pursued to maximum depths of 0.7m and 0.58m below modern ground surface within and beyond architecture, respectively. Investigations concentrated on exposing portions of Str. 204-1st's northwest and southwest flanks; the full dimensions of the edifice were not revealed. One major building phase was identified in the course of this work.

Time Spans

<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Construction Phase</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Strata</u>	<u>Features</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	-	-	S.3	-	
2	Str. 204-1 st	U.1-4, 6-8	-	-	
3	Str. 204-1 st	U.5, 15	-	-	
4	Str. 204-Sub1	U.9-14	-	F.2	
5	-	-	S.1-2	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in the environs of Str. 204-1st was the deposition of at least 0.08m of a light brown soil (S.3) that is flecked with small white inclusions and contains numerous diminutive rocks (S.3's base was not revealed). Stratum 3 was uncovered running 2.64m northwest of Str. 204-1st over which distance it retained a more-or-less flat upper surface. The recovery of artifacts from S.3 indicates that there was a human presence in the area when this soil was being laid down. As there is no impermeable barrier separating S.3 from later deposits, it is possible that some of these cultural materials pertain to TS.2-4.

Time Span 2

Structure 204-1st was fronted on the northwest by a 0.6m-tall stone facing (U.6) that rises directly to the summit. Projecting 2.28m northwest of U.6 is a 0.12m-tall stone-faced outset that is defined on the northwest and southwest by U.3 and 4, respectively. This construction is at least 0.7m wide northeast-southwest (its northeast edge was not uncovered). The summit supports at least one 0.2m-tall wall (U.7) that measures 1.12m northwest-southeast and is 0.65m southeast of U.6. Excavation for 5.4m further to the southeast did not reveal further evidence of summit architecture. This result is hardly definitive of what might have surmounted this platform as the aforementioned excavations were limited to a trench that measured 1m across northeast-southwest.

A 0.3m-high stone facing (U.1) defines Str. 204-1st's southwest flank. Unit 1 gives way to a 1.66m-wide stone tread (included in U.1). That surface terminates on the northeast at a 0.76m-tall wall (U.2) that was traced for 1.2m to the northeast at an angle of approximately 53 degrees before excavation ceased. Unit 2 runs roughly perpendicular to the U.1 facing and seems to define the northwest flank of a room that was probably built against the southwest side of the core platform (defined by U.6 on the northwest).

What may have been the 0.23m-high basal riser (U.8) that defines Str. 204-1st's southeast flank was encountered in the excavations that uncovered Str. 247-1st. If U.8 fulfilled this role, it likely fronted a terrace that extended an undetermined distance to the northwest where it was probably succeeded by one or more ascents leading to the summit.

By the conclusion of TS.2, Str. 204-1st was a stone-faced platform that stood 0.6m tall, measured an estimated 13.5m northwest-southeast (from U.6 to U.8), and was aligned ca. 305 degrees. A 0.12m-tall stone-faced, earth-surfaced outset projects 2.28m northwest of the building's northwest vertical facing. Otherwise, the ascent to the earth-and-stone-surfaced summit of the platform is direct on this flank. Turning to the southwest, a 0.3m-high by 1.66m-wide stone-faced and –surfaced riser gives way on the northeast to what appears to have been at least one room bordered on the northwest by a substantial (0.76m tall) stone wall. This compartment measures at least 1.2m northeast-southwest and was likely bordered by core platform on the northeast (we did not uncover that side of the room). The sole construction possibly associated with Str. 204-1st that was revealed on the southeast is a 0.23m-high basal riser that was probably part of a series of terraces rising towards the summit on the northwest. Most of the constructions raised now were fashioned mostly from river cobbles that are set in a mud mortar. Some cut blocks were incorporated in the facings (U.3 and 4) of northwest outset and in the southwest basal riser (U.1). There was some effort invested in orienting outward the flatter aspects of the rocks that defined the exteriors of walls and terrace facings.

Time Span 3

From what was revealed in our excavations, Str. 204-1st remained largely unchanged during this interval. The major modification that was identified involved the raising of a 0.55m-tall wall (U5) at a point 0.6m northwest of U.6. Unit 5's erection largely buried U.6 and expanded the platform 0.9m to the northwest. As a result of these changes the northwest outset was narrowed to 1.38m across northwest-southeast. A fill composed of a moderately dense concentration of small to medium-size

rocks set in a brown soil matrix (U.15) backs U.5 on the southeast. The stones used in raising U.5 were mostly cobbles that are set in a mud mortar. The flatter sides of the rocks used to fashion U.5's northwest face are generally directed outwards.

Time Span 4

Structure 204-Sub1 was raised now at a distance of 2.3-3.1m southwest of U.1, Str. 204-1st's southwest basal riser. Architecture associated with this entity sits atop 0.14m of F.2, light brown soil that is mottled with a few small white flecks (the base of this earth was not encountered here). Feature 2 contains a moderately light concentration of mostly small rocks that are generally flat-laid. The horizontal dispositions of these stones tentatively suggests that they do not comprise debris that fell from final-phase architecture. Instead F.2 likely comprises fill that was brought in to raise the living surface southwest of Str. 204-1st and to serve as a base for Str. 204-Sub1. As a very similar soil (S.2) was introduced during TS.5 it is hard to say how much of what is identified as F.2 was deposited now and to what extent this possible fill covered Str. 204-1st's architecture on its southwest side. Based on the disposition of rocks that likely tumbled from TS.2 architecture (F.1, TS.5), we infer that F.2 blanketed U.1 though it may have left at least as much as 0.45m of the U.2 cross-wall still visible.

Structure 204-Sub1 appears to have been a free-standing construction that is bordered by stone facings (U.9, 10, 13, 14) that are 0.22-0.33m tall and rise directly to the stone-paved summit (that floor is designated U.11). Structure 204-Sub1's northeast facing (U.9) diverges considerably from a straight course, thus accounting for the variable distance between it and U.1. It was traced for 1.4m at an orientation of approximately 312 degrees at which point it continues for an additional 1.45m at an angle of ca. 7 degrees. Unit 9 proceeds from that point for 1.25m at an alignment of roughly 315 degrees, ending at its junction with U.13. The latter is the northwest facing of Str. 204-Sub1 and was traced for 1.3m to the southwest at which point our investigations of this facing were brought to a close. Unit 10, the southwest facing, was followed for 1.8m northwest from where it entered excavation on the southeast to where it cornered with U.14. The latter was exposed for 0.65m running northeast-southwest before digging ceased. Unit 10 is aligned ca. 144 degrees while U.14 is oriented roughly 243 degrees. A low wall (U.12) that measures 0.45m across projects 0.95m northeast from the southeastern-most exposed portion of U.9.

Taken together, U.9-14 might have defined the limits of two earthen-floored rooms that flanked an elevated stone-surfaced construction on the northeast and southwest. If this was the case, the northeast compartment (Room 1), bordered by U.9 and 12 would have covered 3.1m northwest-southeast and been open on the northwest and southeast. Room 2 on the southwest covers at least 1.8m northwest-southeast by 0.6m, its southeastern and southwestern limits not having been found. The central construction around which these putative enclosures are arranged covers 1.95-2.95m northeast-southwest by at least 3.65m northwest-southeast (its southeast flank lies beyond excavation limits). The entity defined by U.9, 10, and 13 was oriented generally northwest-southeast (312-324 degrees) though its northeast face diverges from that course over part of its exposed extent.

All constructions raised now were fashioned primarily of river-rounded stones set in a mud mortar. A few angular rocks are intermixed with these cobbles. The flatter aspects of the rocks used on the exteriors of walls are generally oriented outwards.

Time Span 5

After the abandonment of Strs. 204-1st and 204-Sub1, as much 0.2m of a light brown soil containing a few small white flecks (S.2) accumulated atop S.3 off Str. 204-1st's northwest side. Though this earth seems to have collected atop F.2 on the building's southwest flank we cannot say for sure what depths it reached here. Blanketing S.2 by 0.17-0.24m is a dark brown clay (S.1) that forms the humus layer. Embedded in S.1 and 2 is a moderately light concentration of rocks (F.1) that likely fell from final-phase architecture.

Structure 247

Structure 247 appeared on ground surface as a series of two nested terraces built into the upper slopes of the northwest-to-southeast descent from the level summit of the high river terrace on which the Northeast Group was raised. The ground in the building's immediate vicinity rises 1.74m over 22.9m from southeast to northwest. Digging here uncovered approximately 178m², excavations being pursued to maximum depths of 0.62m and 0.4m below modern ground surface beyond and within architecture, respectively. One major building phase was identified in the course of clearing very approximately 90% of Str. 247-1st.

Time Spans

Time Span	Construction Phase	Units	Strata	Features	Dates
1	-	-	S.4	-	
2	-	-	S.3	F.4	
3	Str. 247-1 st	U.1-18	-	F.2-3, 5	
4	-	-	S.1-2	F.1	

Time Span 1

The earliest activity attested to in the vicinity of Str. 247-1st is the deposition of at least 0.14m of a hard-compacted, fine-textured, dark brown clay (S.4) in which are embedded very small white flecks (S.4's base was not encountered). Stratum 4 was exposed over 0.66m southeast-northwest at a point 1.9m southeast of, and downslope from, Str. 247-1st. The earth layer ascends 0.06m over this distance from northwest to southeast. No cultural material was retrieved from this limited segment of S.4, very tentatively suggesting that there was no human occupation in the immediate environs while this portion of the layer was accumulating.

Time Span 2

This interval may have witnessed the construction and burial of a building that lies northwest and upslope from Str. 247-1st. The reason for uncertainty is that the evidence for the putative

construction is equivocal. Specifically, it consists of a dense concentration of flat-laid rocks (F.4) that was uncovered in the base of excavation extending out from beneath, and for 2.64m northwest of, Str. 247-1st's U.9. Feature 4 was only exposed within a 1m-wide (northeast-southwest) trench. The horizontal disposition of F.4's stones suggests that they were purposefully placed though, outside of that observation, there is no clear evidence of how they fit into a coherent construction. Feature 4 was subsequently blanketed by a hard-compacted, fine-textured, brown clay (S.3) that contains numerous small white flecks. Stratum 3 is at least 0.34m thick; its base was not encountered. Discontinuous segments of S.3 were exposed over 11.26m northwest-southeast over which distance it dropped 0.65m. There is relatively little difference between S.3 and 4; they are distinguished primarily by the latter's darker brown hue. It could be that the construction of whatever F.4 might have been associated with and the deposition of S.3 and 4 were roughly contemporary.

Time Span 3

Structure 247-1st was raised directly on ancient ground surface. The edifice's perimeter is delimited by stone foundations (U.1-3, 7, and 9) that are 0.27-0.36m tall by 0.3-0.6m wide. The southwestern footing (U.1) defines a continuous, straight course, cornering with U.2 on the southeast. Unit 15 is appended to U.1's southeast end, measuring 0.5m wide southwest-northeast and extending 2.4m northwest from the inferred intersection of U.1 and 2 that forms Str. 247-1st's south corner (that junction was poorly preserved). Unit 2 thickens from 0.3m to 0.5m across over its southwestern-most 2.35m. That expansion was achieved by adding to U.2 on its northwest (interior) face. The northwest margin of Str. 247-1st is marked by a 'L-shaped' wall (U.9). Unit 9's stem (or long segment) runs for 4.4m northeast-southwest, its leg projecting 1.1m southeast from the stem's southwest edge. The relatively ample widths of these segments of U.9 (0.6m and 0.9m across the stem and leg, respectively) tentatively suggests that this construction might have doubled as a wall support and bench or shelf. The edifice's northeast margin is defined by U.3 and 7. Unit 3 runs for 5.5m northwest from its junction with U.2, that intersection comprising Str. 247-1st's east corner. At this point it joins U.4, a 0.18m-tall by 0.4m-wide wall that extends for 3.65m to the southwest, forming a right angle with U.3. Unit 7, in turn, is 0.3m north of U.3 and continues the line of the former for an additional 2.6m to the northwest. Unit 6, a 0.24m-tall by 0.4m-wide wall, intersects U.7 on the southeast, running for 3.9m to the southwest of that junction. Units 4 and 6 pursue parallel courses, separated by 0.3m. Unit 6 ends on the southwest at U.5, a comparably low wall that measures 0.45m across and is 1.05m long northwest-southeast. Unit 4 stops 0.1m shy (northeast) of U.5. The overall effect of constructing U.3-7 in this way is to create a 0.3m-wide by 3.75-3.9m deep indentation within Str. 247-1st's northeast foundation. The purpose of this clear construction is uncertain. It might have served to channel air from the northeast into Room 3. It may also mark a break in building efforts, Units 6 and 7 on the northwest and U.3 and 4 on the southeast being raised at different times.

Structure 247-1st's interior is partitioned into three rooms arranged in a rough "C'-shape looking to the northeast. Room 1 covers 3.8x6.8m and takes up most of the northern part of the building. Surviving evidence suggests that this space was originally surfaced with a burnt-earth floor (F.3). Feature 3 is 0.02m thick and rests on 0.1m of a brown soil (included in F.3) that covers S.3. The enclosure is bounded by Units 6, 7, and 9 on the southeast, northeast, and northwest, respectively. Its southwest flank is largely open. A 0.16m-high by 0.5m-wide wall (U.11) defines Room 1's southwest corner. It projects 1.5m northwest of U.6, runs for a total northwest-southeast length of 3.1m, and lies 0.35-0.5m southwest of U.5. Access to Room 1 from outside Str. 247-1st was seemingly through a 2.5m-

wide door in its northeast flank. The southeast side of this passage is defined by U.8, a 0.2m-high, roughly rectangular construction that is 0.4m northwest of U.7. Unit 8 is 1m-wide by 1.45m long northwest-southeast and is roughly in line with U.7. This construction's relatively great width suggests that it might have served as a shelf.

A 3.9m-wide gap between U.11 on the southeast and U.9 on the northwest afforded a means of moving southwest from Room 1 to Room 2, the latter taking up most of Str. 247-1st's southwestern interior. This earthen-floored enclosure covers 3.15m northeast-southwest by 8.75m northwest-southeast. The compartment is open on the northwest and bordered by U.1, 13, and 11 on the southwest, southeast, and northeast. Unit 13 is a 0.18m-tall by 0.3m-wide wall that is 1.5m long northeast-southwest; it stops 0.1m shy (northeast) of U.1. The 2.25m separating U.11 and 13 provided passage to Room 3 on the northeast. The dominant construction within Room 2 is U.10, a 0.22m-tall stone-faced and –surfaced bench that is built against U.1 on the enclosure's southwest side. Unit 10 covers 5.25m northwest-southeast and has a crenellated northeast face. The northwest margin of U.10 projects 2.25m northeast from U.1 and then turns and runs for 0.6m to the southeast. At this point there is a 1.05m wide indentation that extends 0.95m southwest into the body of U.10. Southeast of this 'niche,' U.10 runs for 2.1m at a width of 2.2m before stepping back (southwest) for 0.9m. From this point U.10 continues for ca. 1.5m before returning to join U.1 which is 1m to the southwest.

Room 3 is an earthen-floored compartment that measures 4.2x4.8m and takes up most of Str. 247-1st's east side. A 0.23m-tall by 0.65m wide wall (U.14) projects 1.55m northeast from U.1 and narrows to 1m across the doorway located in Room 3's southwest corner. Unit 14 is 0.7-0.9m southeast of U.13. Unit 12, a 0.15m-tall shelf, is located within Room 3. This construction covers, maximally, 1.5m northeast-southwest by 1m northwest-southeast and has a 0.15m-wide projection that extends 0.6m northeast from U.12's east corner. That extension stops 0.3m southeast of Str. 247-1st's northeast foundation (U.3).

Two segments of what seems to have been the same construction (U.16) were recovered 0.75m and 1m northeast of U.7 and 9, respectively. The architectural significance of this 0.28m-tall wall is unclear. It might have served to slow erosion down this flank. At a point 0.8m southeast of U.2 a dense concentration of stones (F.5) was recorded in the base of excavation. Feature 5's rocks are flat-laid and seem to have been built into the southeast-to-northwest upward ascent, covering 0.78m in this direction over which the feature rises 0.29m. When excavated, F.5 did not give the impression of having been formalized architecture. Nonetheless, the horizontal dispositions of its component rocks weakly suggest that F.5 might have been the remnants of foundations for terraces that originally protected the downslope-facing flank of Str. 247-1st from the full effects of erosion. The dense concentration of rocks fallen from final-phase architecture (F.1, TS.4) that directly overlies F.5 might be what is left of that terrace system.

Excavations also uncovered parts of what might have been constructions related to other buildings that were not further investigated. Two stone-faced terraces were identified off Str. 247-1st's west corner, the basal riser (U.18) being 4.3m west of U.9. Unit 17 is 0.3m high by 0.8m wide and gives way on the northeast to U.18. The latter ascends 0.2m above U.17's tread and continues for an unknown distance to the northeast. What construction U.17 and 18 might have been parts of is unknown. A 0.02m-thick lens of burnt earth (F.2) was traced for 0.49m southeast from the northwest edge of excavation. Feature 2 descends 0.08m from northwest-to-southeast over this distance, riding

atop S.3 and stopping 3.15m northeast of U.9. Feature 2 was apparently part of a construction lying to the northwest, possibly nearby Str. 204-1st. More than that we cannot say.

As TS.3 drew to a close, Str. 247-1st was an earthen-floored, surface-level building that covered 8.9x13.8m (excluding U.16), and was oriented ca. 312 degrees. It is delimited by stone foundations that are 0.27-0.36m tall by 0.3-0.6m wide. The L-shaped northern footing (U.9) is sufficiently broad (0.6-0.9m across) to have doubled as a wall support and shelf. A 0.3m-wide (northwest-southeast) by 3.75-3.9m deep (northeast-southwest) fissure pierces the northeast foundation at a point 5.5m northwest of the building's east corner. This break in construction may indicate that the building reached its final form through a series of additions though the order of that sequence is not clear. Structure 247-1st's interior is divided into three enclosures that are arranged in the manner of a 'C' oriented to the northeast. Room 1, in the northeast, covers 25.8m², had a burnt-earth floor, and was entered through a 2.5m-wide door in its north corner. That passage is bordered on the southeast by a 0.2m tall, 1x1.45m stone-faced and –surfaced shelf while the aforementioned L-shaped U.9 defines the compartment's northwest side. Room 2 lies southwest of Room 1, traffic passing between the enclosures being funneled through a 3.9m-wide door; Room 2 was also apparently open on the northwest. Room 2 covers 27.6m² and is dominated by a 0.22m-tall by 5.25m-long (northwest-southeast) stone-faced and –surfaced bench (U.10) built against the enclosure's southwest wall. The bench's northeast face does not define a continuous, straight line; a 0.95m-deep by 1.05m-wide niche is built into its northern portion while its southeastern-most 1.5m is set back 0.9m southwest from the bench's northeast face. Overall, U.10 is 1.05-2.25m wide. No walls obstructed movement between Rooms 2 and 3. The latter is northeast of the former, southeast of Room 1, and encompasses 20.2m². A 1m-wide door in the compartment's south corner provided a means of entering Rooms 2 and 3 from this direction. A 0.15m-high stone-faced and –surfaced shelf is found within Room 3. It covers, maximally, 1x1.5m and has a 0.15m wide extension that projects 0.6m northeast from the shelf's east corner. That extension stops 0.3m short (southwest) of U.3, the compartment's northeast wall. A 0.28m-tall stone wall lying 0.75-1m northeast of Str. 247-1st might have been built to slow erosion off this side of the river terrace. The poorly preserved remains of what might have been at least one stone terrace (F.5) were tentatively identified 0.8m southeast of the edifice on this, its most steeply down-sloping flank.

Constructions pertaining to other buildings were found west and northwest of Str. 247-1st. The most substantial of these were two stone-faced risers (U.17 and 18) located 4.3m west of Str. 247-1st. These terraces are 0.2m and 0.3m tall, the basal riser measuring 0.8m across northeast-southwest. They ascend southwest-to-northeast and are aligned roughly 320 degrees. The nature of the construction of which these risers were a part is unclear. A 0.02m-thick layer of burnt earth (F.2) was recorded 3.15m northwest of Str. 247-1st. Feature 2 was revealed for 0.49m northwest-southeast over which it distance dropped 0.08m in that direction. This burnt earth layer was not clearly associated with other architecture.

All constructions that were raised now were fashioned primarily of river cobbles that were set in a mud mortar. A few angular stones were mixed with these river-rounded rocks in the observed walls. It is not clear that the stones used to face these footings and benches were chosen for their flatter aspects or that these vertical faces were consistently directed outwards.

Time Span 4

After Str. 247-1st's abandonment, as much as 0.28m of a moderately fine-textured, moderately hard-compacted, brown soil (S.2) was laid down. Stratum 2 was identified primarily southeast of the building here it blankets S.4 and F.5. Fully 0.21-0.24m of a very similar soil (S.1) was found covering F.2 northwest of Str. 247-1st along with most of the rest of the edifice. Eighteen centimeters of S.1 covers S.2 on the southeast. A very light scattering of rocks (F.1) that likely tumbled from TS.3 architecture was embedded in S.1 over most of the building. Many more of these stones were encountered within S.1 and 2 directly above the putative southeastern terrace(s) (F.5, TS.3). As noted in the discussion of TS.3, these rocks might be all that remains of the aforementioned terraces that had lost their battle with gravity. This dense concentration of fallen stones covers 1.5m northwest-southeast.

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